

lamentable loss of life which resulted from that fall, and to ascertain the number of persons whose lives were thereby sacrificed; also, to ascertain by whose authority or through whose ministry the said bridge was constructed, by whom planned, and under whose superintendence it was erected, and generally to enquire into all facts and circumstances antecedent to the above accident in any way connected with the erection and management of the said bridge and the said loss of life, have the honor to submit the following report:—

By the Provincial Statute 14 and 15 Vic., cap. 133, the Trustees of the Quebec Turnpike Roads were authorized to purchase the Bridge over the Montmorency River and to rebuild it, and for these purposes were permitted to borrow a sum not exceeding five thousand pounds. The old Bridge was accordingly purchased on the 23d April 1852, for the sum of two thousand pounds, and in consequence of an application made by the Trustees to the Commissioner of the Board of Works, the services of Mr. Rubidge were placed at their disposal, and at the suggestion of this gentleman, Mr. Samuel Keefer, Civil Engineer, with whom Mr. Rubidge had been engaged some years before in designing and constructing the Union Suspension Bridge at the City of Ottawa, was also consulted.

Messrs. Keefer and Rubidge, accompanied by several gentlemen of the Trust, visited the Montmorency, and, after examination of the River and banks, fixed on the site of the Suspension Bridge immediately above the cataract, as near the fall as prudence would allow, at a distance of about three hundred yards from the old bridge; Mr. Rubidge measured the width of the river at this spot by triangulation, and made it (as appears by figures on plans furnished at a later period) three hundred and sixty feet from rock to rock.

This visit and preliminary survey were made about the commencement of 1852, and on the twenty-seventh of September, 1853, Messrs. Keefer and Rubidge transmitted to the Trustees the plans and specifications of a Suspension Bridge, the estimate of the total cost of which was five thousand two hundred pounds.

At the first meeting of the Trustees after the reception of these plans and specifications, it was decided to insert an advertisement in the papers calling for Tenders to build the bridge, returnable on the thirtieth of November, 1853, but on the sixth of December, conceiving that if more time were given, contractors from Upper Canada and the United States would be induced to make offers, the time for receiving tenders was extended to the first of February, 1854.

In answer to this advertisement several tenders were received, of which the lowest was from Mr. Thomas A. Walker, for a bridge of four hundred feet span for the sum of nine thousand three hundred and seventy-eight pounds.

The plans furnished by Mr. Keefer were dated June, 1852, and by these Mr. Keefer, basing his calculations upon the distance of three hundred and sixty feet from rock to rock, recommended that the centre of the towers should be placed three hundred and eighty-four feet apart.

It would appear that Mr. Keefer, at a later period, had some doubts as to the nature of the foundations, for in the specification which was written in September, 1853, more than a year after the completion of the drawings, it is stated that the centre of the towers should be about four hundred feet apart.

In August, 1853, one month before the plans and specifications were received from Mr. Keefer, the Trustees engaged Mr. William H. Rankin as Engineer to the Quebec Turnpike Trust.

A few days after Messrs. Rubidge's and Keefer's drawings of the Suspension Bridge had been laid before the Trustees, Mr. Rankin, conceiving that he might be ordered by the Board to carry the design into execution, examined the plans and specifications and also the site of the proposed bridge.